

What is claimed is:

1. A steam reformer for converting a fuel into a reformate stream comprising hydrogen, said reformer comprising a closed vessel and a burner disposed within said vessel, said burner comprising:
 - (a) a start fuel manifold for receiving and distributing a start fuel stream;
 - (b) an oxidant manifold for receiving and distributing an oxidant stream, said oxidant manifold having a plurality of oxidant distribution tubes, each of said oxidant distribution tubes having an inlet end and an outlet end, said oxidant distribution tubes disposed in a separator member; and
 - (c) a burner fuel manifold for receiving and distributing a burner fuel stream, said burner fuel manifold comprising a plurality of burner fuel distribution tubes, each of said burner fuel distribution tubes having an inlet end and an outlet end, said burner fuel distribution tubes extending through said start fuel manifold and said oxidant manifold and fluidly isolated therefrom, wherein said outlet end of each of said plurality of burner fuel distribution tubes extends into said inlet end of one of said oxidant distribution tubes, forming a gap between the outer wall of said burner fuel distribution tube and the inner wall of said oxidant distribution tube, and said start fuel

manifold has one or more openings therein associated with at least a portion of said burner fuel distribution tubes.

2. A steam reformer for converting a fuel into a reformate stream comprising hydrogen, said reformer comprising a closed vessel and a burner disposed within said vessel, said burner

5 comprising:

10 (a) a burner fuel manifold for receiving and distributing a burner fuel stream, said burner fuel manifold having a plurality of burner fuel distribution tubes, each of said burner fuel distribution tubes having an inlet end and an outlet end, said burner fuel distribution tubes disposed in a separator member;

15 (b) an oxidant manifold for receiving and distributing an oxidant stream, said oxidant manifold comprising a plurality of oxidant distribution tubes, each of said oxidant distribution tubes having an inlet end and an outlet end, said oxidant distribution tubes extending through said burner fuel manifold and fluidly isolated therefrom; and

20 (c) a start fuel manifold for receiving and distributing a start fuel stream, said start fuel manifold comprising a plurality of start fuel distribution tubes, each of said start fuel distribution tubes having an inlet end and an outlet end, said start fuel distribution tubes extending through said

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oxidant manifold and fluidly isolated therefrom,

wherein said outlet end of each of said plurality of oxidant distribution tubes extends into said
35 inlet end of one of said burner fuel distribution tubes, forming a first gap between the outer wall of said oxidant distribution tube and the inner wall of said burner fuel distribution tube, and said outlet end of each of said start fuel
40 distribution tubes extends into said inlet end of a corresponding one of said oxidant distribution tubes, forming a second gap between the outer wall of said start fuel distribution tube and the inner wall of said oxidant distribution tube.

3. The reformer of claim 1 wherein said plurality of burner fuel distribution tubes and said plurality of oxidant distribution tubes are arranged in a hexagonal array.

4. The reformer of claim 1 wherein the gaps formed between said burner fuel distribution tubes and said oxidant distribution tubes are annular gaps.

5. The reformer of claim 1 wherein said openings in said start fuel manifold comprise one or more discrete openings distributed around the circumference of at least a portion of said burner
5 fuel distribution tubes.

6. The reformer of claim 5 wherein said openings are asymmetrically distributed around the

circumference of each of said burner fuel distribution tubes.

7. The reformer of claim 1 wherein at least a portion of said burner fuel distribution tubes extend through and correspond to said openings in said start fuel manifold, forming at least one gap 5 between the outer wall of each of said burner fuel distribution tubes and corresponding said opening.

8. The reformer of claim 7 wherein said gaps between the outer walls of said burner fuel distribution tubes and corresponding said openings are annular gaps.

9. The reformer of claim 7 wherein said at least one gap between at least a portion said burner fuel distribution tubes and corresponding said openings of said start fuel manifold comprises 5 a plurality of gaps.

10. The reformer of claim 9 wherein said gaps between at least a portion of said burner fuel distribution tubes and corresponding said openings of said start fuel manifold are asymmetrically 5 distributed around the circumference of each of said burner fuel distribution tubes.

11. The reformer of claim 1 wherein said separator member comprises insulating material.

12. The reformer of claim 11 wherein said insulating material comprises a ceramic.

13. The reformer of claim 1, further comprising a plurality of substantially cylindrical reformer tubes disposed within said vessel, each of said reformer tubes comprising an outer tube, a
5 substantially concentric inner gas return tube, and an annular catalyst bed defined by the volume between said outer tube and said inner gas return tube.

14. The reformer of claim 13 wherein said reformer tubes further comprise at least one stabilizer member connected to said inner gas return tube and interposed between said outer tube
5 and said inner gas return tube.

15. The reformer of claim 14 wherein said at least one stabilizer member comprises at least one annular perforated plate extending radially from said inner gas return tube.

16. The reformer of claim 14 wherein said at least one stabilizer member comprises at least one fin extending axially from said inner gas return tube.

17. The reformer of claim 13, further comprising a vaporizer disposed within said vessel for receiving and vaporizing a stream comprising water.

18. The reformer of claim 17 wherein said vaporizer comprises a finned tube helical coil.

19. The reformer of claim 17 wherein said vaporizer comprises a corrugated tube helical coil.

20. A steam reformer for converting a fuel into a reformate stream comprising hydrogen, said reformer comprising:

- (a) a closed vessel;
- 5 (b) a plenum disposed within said vessel for receiving said reformate, said plenum having a floor plate;
- (c) a bottom pan disposed within said plenum, said bottom pan substantially in the shape of an inverted bowl and having at 10 least one hole therein; and
- (d) a reformate outlet extending from said floor plate into said plenum in the region defined by the cooperating 15 surfaces of said bottom pan and said floor plate.

21. The reformer of claim 20, further comprising a plurality of substantially cylindrical reformer tubes disposed within said vessel, each of said reformer tubes comprising an outer tube, a 5 substantially concentric inner gas return tube, and an annular catalyst bed defined by the volume between said outer tube and said inner gas return tube.

22. The reformer of claim 21 wherein said reformer tubes further comprise at least one stabilizer member connected to said inner gas return tube and interposed between said outer tube 5 and said inner gas return tube.

23. The reformer of claim 22 wherein said at least one stabilizer member comprises at least one annular perforated plate extending radially from said inner gas return tube.

24. The reformer of claim 22 wherein said at least one stabilizer member comprises at least one fin extending axially from said inner gas return tube.

25. The reformer of claim 1, further comprising:

5 a plurality of substantially cylindrical reformer tubes disposed within said vessel, each of said reformer tubes comprising an outer tube, a substantially concentric inner gas return tube, and an annular catalyst bed defined by the volume between said outer tube and said inner gas return tube;

10 a plenum disposed within said vessel for receiving said reformat, said plenum having a floor plate;

15 a bottom pan disposed within said plenum, said bottom pan substantially in the shape of an inverted bowl and having at least one hole therein; and

20 a reformat outlet extending from said floor plate into said plenum in the region defined by the cooperating surfaces of said bottom pan and said floor plate.

26. The reformer of claim 25 wherein said reformer tubes further comprise at least one

stabilizer member connected to said inner gas return tube and interposed between said outer tube
5 and said inner gas return tube.

27. The reformer of claim 26 wherein said at least one stabilizer member comprises at least one annular perforated plate extending radially from said inner gas return tube.

28. The reformer of claim 26 wherein said at least one stabilizer member comprises at least one fin extending axially from said inner gas return tube.

29. The reformer of claim 25, further comprising a vaporizer disposed within said vessel for receiving and vaporizing a stream comprising water.

30. The reformer of claim 29 wherein said vaporizer comprises a finned tube helical coil.

31. The reformer of claim 29 wherein said vaporizer comprises a corrugated tube helical coil.